

**Opening Statement of Chairman Marsha Blackburn
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
Markup on Four Telecommunications Bills
June 13, 2018**

(As prepared for delivery)

Good afternoon, and welcome to today's markup. Today, the Subcommittee will consider four bipartisan bills for advancement to the full committee. Though each of these bills addresses a different part of our communications ecosystem, they are all timely and important topics—From public safety to closing the digital divide.

First, we will consider Mr. Stewart's National Suicide Hotline Improvement Act, which has five Democratic and five Republican co-sponsors on the Energy and Commerce Committee. With the losses of Anthony Bourdain and Kate Spade in recent weeks, Americans are looking for things we can do to prevent more senseless tragedies. This bill takes an important step in identifying potential ways to use communications technologies to save the lives of those seeking help. The Senate companion to this bill passed the Senate unanimously, and I look forward to moving this bipartisan legislation on to the Full Committee.

We will also consider Mr. Lance and Mr. Tonko's PIRATE Act, which gives the FCC more tools to combat illegal pirate radio operations. These illegal broadcasts deprive Americans of their access to important emergency alerting information and their access to educational and other programming provided by legitimate license-holders.

Additionally, I am pleased that we are continuing our efforts to close the digital divide. Access to broadband continues to lag behind in rural America, and I know bridging this gap is a top priority for many members of this Committee. We will consider Mr. Tonko and Mr. Lance's ACCESS BROADBAND Act, which ensures Federal funding for broadband deployment is tracked and coordinated across the Federal government. Throughout our consideration of NTIA this Congress, from our NTIA reauthorization hearing last year and our NTIA oversight hearing in March, not to mention our infrastructure hearings, it has become clear that we rely on NTIA for its expertise in mapping efforts and coordinating these programs, so I'm pleased we are taking this step forward in our efforts to reauthorize the NTIA.

Finally, we will be considering Mr. Latta and Mr. Loeb's Precision Agriculture Connectivity Act. Bringing broadband to rural America will not only bring connectivity to consumers, but will also bolster the innovative work of the agricultural industry. This bill would require the FCC and Department of Agriculture to form a task force that leverages the FCC's expertise on broadband services to enhance the effectiveness of innovative, high-precision agricultural services.

I'd like to thank the Members of the subcommittee for their work on these bills, especially Mr. Stewart for his passionate leadership on suicide prevention. With that I yield to my friend, the Ranking Member of the subcommittee, Mr. Doyle three minutes for an opening statement.